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COURT AGREES TO KEEP SOME GLOMAR EXPLORER SECRETS

BY ROBERT SANGEORGE

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- THE MYSTERIOUS GLOMAR EXPLORER PROJECT -- AN ATTEMPT TO RAISE A SUNKEN SOVIET SUBMARINE FROM THE PACIFIC OCEAN FLOOR -- MAY REMAIN A PARTIAL SECRET FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.

RULING IN A LENGTHY BATTLE OVER THE PROJECT'S NATIONAL SECURITY VALUE, A FEDERAL APPEALS COURT MONDAY HANDED THE CIA AN IMPORTANT VICTORY IN ITS EFFORT TO KEEP SOME DETAILS OF THE \$350 MILLION ADVENTURE SHROUDED IN SECRECY.

THE U.S. COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA UNANIMOUSLY AFFIRMED A FEDERAL JUDGE'S ACCEPTANCE OF CIA ARGUMENTS THAT DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE PROJECT WOULD POSE A SERIOUS THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY.

THE RULING WAS A DEFEAT FOR THE MILITARY AUDIT PROJECT AND MORTON HALPERIN, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES, WHO HAD REQUESTED ACCESS TO THE CLASSIFIED PAPERS.

THE THREE-JUDGE PANEL SPECIFICALLY REJECTED ARGUMENTS THAT SINCE SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE GLOMAR EXPLORER HAD BEEN LEAKED OR OFFICIALLY DISCLOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT, ALL OF IT SHOULD BE RELEASED.

"THERE MAY BE SOME ADVANTAGE IN LEAVING THE SOVIET INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES WITH LINGERING DOUBTS WHETHER SOME OTHER PURPOSE MOTIVATED THE PROJECT," JUDGE MALCOLM R. WILKEY WROTE FOR THE COURT. "WE CANNOT ASSUME ... THAT THE CIA HAS NOTHING LEFT TO HIDE.

"TO THE CONTRARY, THE RECORD BEFORE US SUGGESTS EITHER THAT THE CIA STILL HAS SOMETHING TO HIDE OR THAT IT WISHES TO HIDE FROM OUR ADVERSARIES THE FACT THAT IT HAS NOTHING TO HIDE."

REPORTS PUBLISHED IN 1975 INDICATED A SOVIET SUBMARINE CARRYING NUCLEAR MISSILES HAD SUNK 750 MILES NORTHWEST OF HAWAII SEVEN YEARS EARLIER. THE OCEAN DEPTH AT THE SITE IS ABOUT THREE MILES.

AFTER THE VESSEL WAS DETECTED BY U.S. NAVY SENSORS, THE NAVY APPROACHED THE CIA TO DEVELOP THE CAPABILITY TO RAISE THE SUB TO ACHIEVE WHAT U.S. OFFICIALS ENVISIONED AS AN INTELLIGENCE COUP -- RECOVERY OF ITS NUCLEAR MISSILES, CODES, COMMUNICATIONS GEAR AND OTHER EQUIPMENT.

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